

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 1, 2012

The Honorable Leon Panetta
Secretary of Defense
US Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1400

Dear Secretary Panetta,

We are writing to ask you to correct an oversight by the Department of Defense, and properly honor the sacrifice of International Police Advisors who have been killed while working for the U.S. military.

As you know, the Department of Defense has awarded several qualified International Police Advisors (IPA) the Secretary of Defense Medal for the Defense of Freedom. However, so far, that recognition appears to have been limited to wounded IPAs, and no IPAs killed in the line of duty have received this award.

The military has a very efficient system to nominate and award killed or injured soldiers the Purple Heart. There is no such structured protocol in place for IPAs working side by side with the military – sometimes even killed or injured in the same incidents. Injured IPAs, who can still help identify the many military officers whose signatures are needed to receive the award, are able to receive recognition. However, IPAs that have been killed are usually represented by their family or an outside group like the Civilian Police Officer's Alumni Association (CAA). These advocates are unable to identify the correct officers and deal with the significant paperwork involved in getting the IPA recognized.

The International Civilian Police Officer's Alumni Association (CAA) recently brought to our attention their multi-year effort to secure proper recognition for a number of officers killed in the line of duty. Included among these brave Americans is Oregonian Deborah Klecker. Ms. Klecker served for 19 years as a sheriff's deputy in Marion County, Oregon. During her career, she built an impeccable professional reputation exemplified through her service on the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training Board and the Oregon Law Enforcement Memorial Fund Board. When provided the opportunity to serve her nation overseas, she did not hesitate.

On June 27, 2005, Deputy Klecker was killed when she, and the Iraqi police she mentored, were attacked with an improvised explosive device. If Deputy Klecker had been a soldier, her unit would have immediately started the paperwork to see to it that she was awarded the Purple Heart. However, because she was a civilian IPA, no effort was made to see to it that she was awarded the civilian equivalent, the Secretary of Defense Medal for the Defense of Freedom. Once the CAA began trying to advocate for Deputy Klecker, time, distance, and rotation of personnel in and out of combat zones had combined to create a situation where it is impossible to complete the necessary paperwork required by current rules.


IPAs who answered the call of duty, served faithfully, and made the ultimate sacrifice have been denied recognition because of an overly difficult system. Without your direct intervention, we fear that Deputy Klecker, her fallen colleagues, and future deceased IPAs will never receive the recognition they deserve.

We have attached a current list of eligible IPA officers. The CAA has vetted these officers, finding them deserving of the medal, but efforts to recognize these deserving patriots continue to encounter bureaucratic hurdles. For the families and friends of the fallen officers, recognition would provide a chance to heal, reflect, and find closure.

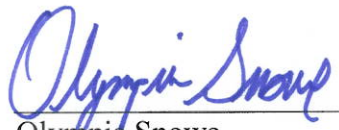
We respectfully request that you create a less onerous method for family members and groups like CAA to nominate IPAs and other deserving civilians to receive the Secretary of Defense Medal for the Defense of Freedom, and see to it that all of those who are eligible for the award because they were killed in the line of duty, receive it.

Thank you for your swift attention to this important matter.

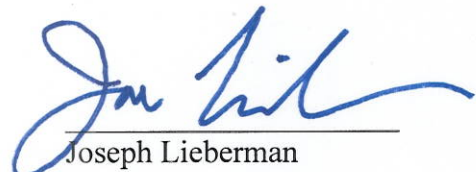
Sincerely,



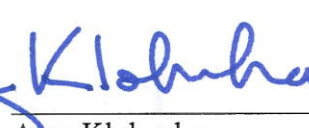
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



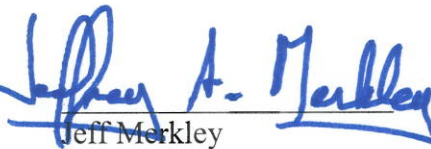
Olympia Snowe
United States Senator



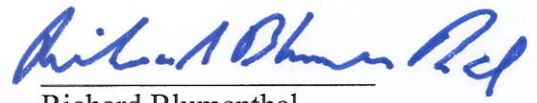
Joseph Lieberman
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator




Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Tim Johnson
United States Senator

United States Police Officers Killed on International Police Missions
Eligible for the Defense of Freedom Medal

Oregon	Deborah Klecker	Iraq	KIA June 2005
Connecticut	Paul Protzenko	Afghanistan	KIA July 2011
Oklahoma	Mike Dawes	Iraq	KIA Aug 2005
South Carolina	Michael W. Butler	Iraq	KIA June 2007
	Leon V. Kimbrell	Iraq	KIA Sept 2005
	Douglas Thomas	Iraq	KIA Dec 2009
Minnesota	William Juneau	Iraq	KIA Nov 2007
Georgia	Samuel Parlin	Iraq	KIA Jan 2006
	Richard Hickman	Iraq	KIA Jan 2006
	Gary Willard	Afghanistan	KIA June 2010
Texas	Rudy Mesa	Iraq	KIA May 2006
	John Deuley	Afghanistan	KIA Aug 2004
Indiana	Ronald Zimmerman	Afghanistan	KIA May 2006
South Dakota	Roland Barvels	Iraq	KIA Jan 2006
Colorado	Donald B. Tow	Iraq	KIA May 2004
Maine	Darrell Wetherbee	Iraq	KIA Sept 2006
Arkansas	Brian M. Brian	Iraq	KIA Oct 2006
Wisconsin	Gerald Gibson	Afghanistan	KIA Aug 2004
New York	Lynn Williams	Kosovo	KIA April 2004
Illinois	Kim Bigley	Kosovo	KIA April 2004
	Gary Weston	Kosovo	KIA April 2004
Arizona	Santa Garcia Ramirez	Afghanistan	KIA June 2007
Kentucky	Brett Brenton	Afghanistan	KIA June 2011

Information Vetted as of February 2012 by the CivPol Alumni Assn.